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Coxe (J. R.)

A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE OCCURRENCES WHICH LED TO THE REMOVAL OF

DR. JOHN REDMAN COXE ✓

FROM THE

CHAIR OF MATERIA MEDICA & PHARMACY,

IN THE

University of Pennsylvania.

[Presented with Dr. Coxe's respects.]

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TO THE PUBLIC.

Since my removal by the Trustees from the Chair of Materia Medica and Pharmacy, in the University of Pennsylvania, I have been busily engaged in preparing for publication an account of the proceedings which led to that result. From the number and extent of the documents which will be required to be printed to establish the facts of my statement, the publication will necessarily be delayed for some time.

As many incorrect stories are in circulation in relation to this transaction, I have been induced to print an edition of an article signed "A PHYSICIAN," which appeared in the "*Pennsylvanian*" newspaper, to circulate amongst my friends preparatory to the publication of my own full statement. This article is written with great temper, and I can vouch for the correctness of the facts it details—facts which will be satisfactorily established by the documents which I shall myself hereafter publish.

Philada. Feb. 23, 1835.

JOHN REDMAN COXE.

To the Editor of the *Pennsylvanian*.

Dear Sir,

I can refrain no longer noticing the riots and scenes of disorder which have for the two last months disgraced the University of Pennsylvania. I had hoped that the Trustees would, by the adoption of some efficient measures, long before this time, have restored order to that Institution; but of this there appears to be no chance.

The Medical School appears to be now in a state of perfect anarchy and confusion, and the students having taken the government into their own hands, and compelled the distinguished Professor, who has for nearly twenty years occupied the Chair of *Materia Medica and Pharmacy*, to discontinue his Lectures, I consider it time that the public should be made acquainted with the facts.

The cause of education is a subject of the deepest interest to the well-being of the Republic; and if it is desirable that this should be fostered, the discipline of your colleges and schools must be sustained.

Aware of the deep interest which you take in every thing connected with the education of our youth, I send you herewith a brief history of all the transactions which have led to, and terminated in, obliging Dr. Coxe to discontinue his Lectures. I enjoy ample opportunities for obtaining information in reference to the medical affairs of our city, and of this you may rest assured, that I have detailed no fact without taking care to be well assured as to its truth. Should you determine to publish the article in your extensively circulated journal, I am sure that it will be perused with intense interest, not only by the members of the Medical Profession, but by the public of the United States.

I am, sir, Respectfully yours,

A PHYSICIAN.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

It was during the Summer of 1831, that the attempt was first made to prejudice the interests of the *Professor of Materia Medica and Pharmacy*, in the University of Pennsylvania. The plan pursued, which our space in your columns will not allow us for the present to narrate, was assuredly a most Michiavalian one. Its object was to prove, that the department of "*Materia Medica and Pharmacy*" was really, in the study of Medicine, a very subordinate one, and that it was unjust that the student should be compelled to pay the same fee for his instruction in these subjects, as he paid for his Lectures on Chemistry, Obstetrics, &c. &c. Will the profession believe it possible, that the whole of Dr. Coxe's colleagues signed a document to that effect, and addressed it to the Trustees of the University. Even the Professor of Chemistry, the great object of whose Chair, so far as a medical class is concerned, is to illustrate the doctrines of *Materia Medica and Pharmacy*, actually sent into the Trustees a statement, that the department of *Materia Medica and Pharmacy* was too insignificant to occupy the whole time of a Professor!!

The question naturally arises—*Cui bono?* What object could these gentlemen have in depreciating the interest and importance of the department of the *Materia Medica*? We cannot pretend to fathom the motives which could have induced the members of so learned a body, to affix their signatures to the statement of an opinion, of which, we feel assured, they must, on reflection have felt heartily ashamed. Dr. Coxe will, in all probability, consider it his duty to become himself the historian of this transaction; and until he does so, and explains to the Profession the motive which actuated his colleagues, we must content ourselves with merely giving the surmises of the public. We are far from vouching for their truth; they may be entirely destitute of foundation; but such as they are, we offer them to our readers.

Some years before the discovery was made, that *Materia Medica and Pharmacy* were of subordinate importance to the study of Medicine, the distinguished Professor who occupies the Chair of "*The Theory and Practice of Physic and of Clinical Medicine*" in the Uni-

versity, finding the duties of his professorship too onerous to be discharged by himself, appointed, with a salary of \$1000 per annum, as his assistant, a gentleman well known to the profession as the author of a work on "*The Principles of Medicine founded on the Animal Organism*." This salary was paid for some time, by the gentleman who made the appointment; but it being afterwards argued, that as the talents and eloquence of the assistant professor gave *eclat* to the Medical School, it was but fair that all of the Professors, participating as they did in the benefits derived from his labours, should likewise participate in the expense of supporting him. This seems to have been the view entertained by the Trustees on the subject, and a resolution was proposed and carried in accordance with it, by which those Professors who were not already taxed with the payment of salaries to adjuncts, were to be taxed with the payment of their proportions of this salary. Now, the public were uncharitable enough to surmise, that one object at least, which actuated the Professors in depreciating the importance of *Materia Medica* and Pharmacy, was to get rid of the payment of this salary. The only reason, however, which they appear to have had for thinking so, was, that the same gentleman who inculcated the opinion that *Materia Medica* and Pharmacy were of trifling importance, proposed that that Chair should be united with the Institutes of Medicine, the department taught by the Assistant Professor; and that in future "*Materia Medica, Pharmacy, and the Institutes of Medicine*" should form one professorship, and that the present incumbent of the Chair of *Materia Medica* and Pharmacy should have associated with him as co-professor, to deliver the lectures on the department of the Institutes, the gentleman, who, as assistant professor, had up to this time delivered these lectures, and that in lieu of his salary, he should receive one half of the fees.

We shall not pretend to offer an opinion, whether this was or was not the motive which influenced the Professors, in deteriorating the value of "*Materia Medica and Pharmacy*" in the study of Medicine. The remarkable nature of the denunciation against it, rendered the more remarkable from the fact that it was made by gentlemen, who, for years, had been the associates of the present incumbent, and who had never, *before a salary was to be paid by them to an Assistant Professor*, discovered that the department taught by Dr. Coxe was unimportant; made likewise by one gentleman, who had himself occupied that Chair, and who had paid the highest compliment to its value and importance, by publishing a Text Book for its students, a compliment, by-the-by, which he has never paid to the Professorship he now occupies. Nothing, we repeat, but the difficulty of guessing at the motives which actuated Dr. Coxe's colleagues in acting in so unaccountable a manner, could have induced us even to mention these surmises of the public.

The good sense of the Trustees was, however, not to be misled by opinions so preposterous and absurd, emanating although they did, from so high a source. The proposition for breaking up the Professorship of *Materia Medica* and Pharmacy was rejected; and the School opened for the session of 1831-2, with the same arrangement of Chairs, as had before existed, and as they still exist in all the Medical Schools of any celebrity in this country. The attempt to prove that the department of *Materia Medica* and Pharmacy was of minor importance in the study of medicine, having failed, a new discovery was now made. The Professor of *Materia Medica*, who had been considered worthy of being the associate of Rush and Wistar, &c. &c.: of those great men who gave to the University of Pennsylvania that name and reputation on which she now lives, and whose competency, when placed in such a galaxy, had never been doubted, was now declared to be incompetent;—we shall not pretend to inquire as to the source from whence this charge first originated. That it was made, and that it led to disturbances in the class during the session of 1831-2, is a fact of notoriety. But we must abridge a history of the

transactions of this session, by briefly stating that the students were induced, by some means or other, to get up a Memorial to the Trustees, declaring that the Professor of Materia Medica was incompetent, and requesting his dismissal!!!—The prayer of this Memorial was not listened to by the Trustees; and every man, who had the honour and the interests of his profession at heart, was led to hope that here the matter would have terminated, and that scenes so unbecoming and so prejudicial to the interests of every Academical Institution in the country, as those which had been enacted in the University of Pennsylvania, would never again have been permitted to occur.

For the two following sessions, the affairs of the University moved on, *in so far as the public could discover*, most harmoniously. There was no rioting nor disturbance in the theatres—no meetings of students to decide on the competency of their Professors. We doubt not but that past grievances had been almost forgotten by the Professor of Materia Medica, and that the idea of his being again made the subject of persecution, was one which never entered his mind.—Delusive hope!—The storm of opposition, it is true, had for a season ceased to show itself, but the calm and tranquillity were illusory and deceptive. As the volcano, after an irruption, will for years appear to remain at rest, while the elements of disorder and destruction are busily preparing within its breast, again to pour out by its craters rivers of fire, to destroy and desolate every living existence, which, deceived by its calm, has unwarily settled within the sphere of its influence. So it was with the University of Pennsylvania. The opposition to Dr. Coxe, although it had ceased to manifest itself openly, had not died; it had not even slept: but secretly and unceasingly it was preparing its plans, and so combining its elements, that, on its second irruption, it might the more certainly consummate its sacrifice.

We do not pretend even to guess, as to who were the authors and organizers of the rebellion which was this year got up against the Professor of Materia Medica and Pharmacy. That a plan was organized for this purpose, there is demonstrative evidence, and evidence which no man of judgment can hesitate to receive. If the dissatisfaction which has been expressed by the students against Dr. Coxe had originated from any incompetency on his part, in the performance of the duties of his Chair, this dissatisfaction would assuredly have manifested itself at the close, not at the commencement of his Lectures. Last season, the business of the session was gone over, and, on its termination, there was certainly no stronger evidence of dissatisfaction expressed by the pupils of the School against the zeal and ability of the Professor of Materia Medica, than against that of any of his colleagues. But, this year, disapprobation was expressed, and a disturbance was got up in the Class Room of Dr. Coxe, the very first day he made his appearance in his Chair, viz. on the delivery of his Introductory Lecture. We insist that this single fact furnishes unquestionable evidence, that a plan was organized before the commencement of the Lectures, (by whom, we do not even pretend to surmise,) for his ruin and expulsion from his Professorship. Who, we would ask, constituted the members of the Class, to whom Dr. Coxe delivered the Introductory Lecture referred to? Was not a large proportion of them young gentlemen who had just commenced the study of medicine, and who had never before heard a Lecture delivered on the subject of the Materia Medica? And will it for a moment be believed, even by the most credulous and stupid, that these ingenuous and generous youths would, unless excited to it, have so far forgot the modesty and generosity of their natures, as to have offered insult to a stranger,—aye! and to a stranger surrounded by the imposing influences of academic authority, and rendered venerable by the hoary head of age. It is impossible!—It is not to be credited!

Our account of the riots which have occurred in the University of Pennsylvania during the present session, must, from the limited space you can spare us in your columns, be necessarily much abridged. We shall merely detail a few of the more prominent facts. The pro-

session will no doubt be soon furnished with a full statement of the whole transactions, by the gentleman whose character and reputation have been so wantonly attacked.

As we have before mentioned, the plot to ruin the Professor of "*Materia Medica and Pharmacy*," contrived by whomsoever it might, must have been all arranged before the commencement of the Lectures.—Indeed, we have heard it whispered, that it was determined, in the first instance, that a riot should have prevented the Lecturer proceeding with his Introductory Lecture, and thus closing his labours at their commencement. But, whether it was believed that a proceeding of this kind might have had the effect of driving the students from the Institution, seeing the majority of the Class had not taken their tickets at so early a period of the session, certain it is, that if this measure was ever contemplated, it was abandoned, and the disturbances of the first Lecture were confined to hissing, and some other marks of disapprobation. So soon, however, as the Class was formed, *those who pulled the wires*, gave the impulse, and the rebellion broke out. A placard was pasted on the Board, calling for a meeting of the Class: and this having been convened, speeches of a most decided character were delivered, and a series of resolutions declaratory of the incompetency of the Professor, and of the determination of the pupils that he should be expelled from his Chair, were proposed and carried by a majority of the Class. The majority having succeeded in carrying their resolutions, a meeting was next summoned by the minority, for the purpose of passing a series of resolutions contradictory of those passed by the majority, and with the view of sustaining and supporting their Professor. But, when these gentlemen met and attempted to appoint a Chairman, and proceed to business, the majority interfered, a riot and battle took place *in one of the theatres of the University*, and, as the minority were the weaker party, they were compelled to desist from their generous attempt to support a persecuted and highly respectable gentleman. During this disturbance, blows were struck, and, as the consequence, a challenge given.

It is strange, and to us altogether unaccountable, that the duel which followed this challenge, was ever permitted to take place. That it was to be fought, was a subject of notoriety and general conversation, both in and out of the School, for several days before it took place.—Its arrangements, and the place where the parties were to meet, (the State of Delaware,) were all freely discussed: yet no steps appeared to have been taken by the Professors to prevent it. Several medical gentlemen intimately connected with the University, were engaged to attend the combatants; and it was indeed positively asserted, that the Professor of Surgery himself attended on the field. We confess we cannot credit this latter statement, although it is generally believed in the City. We cannot believe that that gentleman would so far forget his professorial character, as to countenance, by his presence, a duel between two of his pupils. It is true, that the Professor referred to, was, on the morning when the meeting took place, absent from the City, and did not lecture; and this circumstance, *which might be accidental*, was probably the cause which gave rise to the report so current, that he had professionally attended the parties. We have since heard that he left town to prevent the meeting taking place, but this is certainly not true: for, had that gentleman, or any other member of the Faculty, been at all solicitous to prevent the duel, they might have easily done so, by having the belligerents bound over to keep the peace, before they left the City for Delaware. That it was to take place, was well known to those who were *unconnected* with the Institution; and it is hardly to be supposed, that a fact of such notoriety, and one so much talked of by the students could be unknown to the Professors, who were in daily communication with them.—Fortunately, no lives were lost. On the first fire, one of the parties was wounded, and the affair terminated.

We are anxious to draw a veil over those scenes of riot and disturbance which were daily enacted at the door of Dr. Coxe's Class

Room, with the view of disturbing the Professor, and deterring the pupils from attending his Lectures. These were commenced the day after the meeting held for passing resolutions against him, and persevered in until last Thursday, when the Professor was compelled to discontinue his Lectures. The authorities who permitted these disturbances to occur daily at Dr. Coxe's Lecture, were assuredly much more to blame than the young gentlemen who were engaged in them. Had the other Professors only come forward, and with kindness remonstrated with the pupils on the impropriety of their conduct, we know enough of the generous feelings of students, to feel persuaded that nothing more would have been required to induce them to desist, and harmony and good order might thus have been restored to the University. But they did not do so, and the painful duty is imposed on us to relate the particulars of the closing act of this most remarkable history.

A meeting of the Trustees having been held on 6th January, and its having been expected that the Professor would most certainly have been dismissed from office, on that occasion, by the Governors of the Institution, *such being the determination of the pupils*. When the students, on the following morning, were informed that the Board could not act on their Memorial without a violation of the regulations of the University, except at a meeting specially summoned for the occasion, —which meeting had been summoned for the following Tuesday, the Memorialists lost all patience, a meeting was instantly got up, and it was determined that the students should themselves, the following morning, compel the Professor to discontinue his Lectures.

We have received from several eye-witnesses, on whom we have perfect confidence, an account of this closing scene: and, had we not done so, we would not have given credit to its details. They are of such a character, and so subversive of every thing like academical discipline and propriety, that, for the honour of our City and country, we feel almost ashamed to give currency to them. The *Press* is, however, not only the Palladium of the liberties of a *People*, but of the rights of an *individual*: and, when these have been so scandalously violated, as they have been on this occasion, it is but just that they should be called on to exercise her chastening influence.

For the first half hour of the Lecture delivered on the occasion referred to, the Professor was permitted to proceed with comparatively little disturbance. The passages, it is true, were blocked up: and, as the students who were desirous to be benefited by Dr. Coxe's Lecture, entered, the hootings and hisses with which they were assailed, in some measure drowned the voice of the Teacher. Still, however, with calmness and dignity, he proceeded with the performance of his duties: and one gentleman who was present, (an intelligent Physician,) has assured us, that a clearer and more scientific account of the articles of the *Materia Medica*, which the Doctor discussed, could not have been given. The gentlemen who were creating the disturbance, finding that no noise which they could make without, could have the effect of interrupting the Professor, and putting a stop to his Lecture, determined to proceed to extremities. A band of about twenty rushed into the theatre, and with clubs and other instruments, began to beat on the benches in such a manner, as to compel the Lecturer to be silent. So soon, however, as comparative quiet was restored, Dr. Coxe, with great mildness, addressed them nearly in the following words: "Gentlemen—I had hoped, that, as your '*Memorial*' in reference to me is now before the Trustees, and, as its consideration cannot, without violating the Rules which govern them, be discussed until next Tuesday, that you would have had the politeness to allow me, until their decision was known, to have continued to perform the duties of my Chair without molestation. If the Trustees remove me, I shall bow submissively to their decision: but, until they do so, I shall continue to perform my duty." Mild and temperate as this address was, the Professor was only permitted to deliver it amidst hisses and hootings, and, on its conclusion, the riot became so fearful, that the venerable Professor retreated to his private room; and one of his friends, afraid

from the excitement of the Class, that personal violence might be offered him, locked the door. The private room was now surrounded, and, although the hour for another Lecture arrived, the mass of students continued to keep their position, and so to block up all means of leaving the building, that the Professor was confined for nearly two hours. At the end of this time, the Professor of the Theory and Practice of Physic made his appearance to deliver his Lecture; and, as he occupies the same theatre with the Professor of Materia Medica, a passage was made for him by the pupils to the private room attached to that theatre, and then occupied as a place of safety by the persecuted Professor. Having made himself known, and gained admission, he speedily re-appeared, supporting Dr. Coxe.—The scene, we are told, was a most affecting one. Even the most violent of the rioters seemed to feel it as such. The howls and hootings which had a moment before rent the air, were hushed: and, as the venerable gentleman, bent down, and looking broken hearted, passed on, leaning on his colleague, the crowd opened a passage for him. Respect for their injured Professor, seemed, for the moment, to have regained its sway, and by some of the more generous spirits, the tribute of a tear was paid to his wrongs.

The Professor of the Theory and Practice of Physic having conducted his colleague from the court of the University into the street, and having shaken him by both his hands, *apparently in the most friendly and affectionate manner*, entered his Class, and addressed the pupils of the School.

The speech he delivered must be admitted, was a most remarkable one to have come from a Professor to a class of students in open rebellion to one of his colleagues, and whose case, let it be observed, was at the time, *sub judice*. We cannot vouch for the very words, but this we do vouch for, that we have not exaggerated its spirit, in so far as this might bear on the Professorial reputation of his colleague, and tend to support the students in their acts of insubordination.

“Gentlemen—I appear before you under great agitation. Indeed, I can scarcely address you. You have had just cause of complaint, and your conduct up to this day has been perfectly proper and correct. You are free born American citizens, and, as such, are entitled to express your opinions. But your proceedings of this day were very improper, and will only tend to prejudice your own cause. I have myself again and again stated to the Trustees, that I consider Dr. Coxe incompetent to deliver a course of lectures on Materia Medica. His being unable to do so is not his fault, but his misfortune; he is a respectable gentleman, a good husband, a good father, and a good citizen; and, as such, he ought not to be insulted.”

We cannot proceed without offering a few comments on this remarkable Professorial address.

Having assured the Class that his feelings were very much agitated for his colleague's wrongs, whom he had, but the moment before, in the presence of his audience, so affectionately shaken by both hands, he immediately afterwards tells them that “they had just cause of complaint against him,” and that their “conduct up to that day had been perfectly correct.”

What, it may be asked, had been their conduct to their professor up to this day? Why, it had been a continued series of insults. His theatre had been converted into an arena for the delivery of speeches declaratory of his incompetency. Every day, on entering his class room, both he, and those gentlemen who wished to derive the benefits of his lectures, had been insulted with hisses and hootings, and during their delivery, every disturbance which could be contrived to annoy him and his pupils, had been perpetrated. Yet the assembled class are informed by his brother Professor, that up to that day their conduct was perfectly correct. In short, they are informed, that so long as they do not offer personal violence to their Professor, the Class was to find an advocate in one of Dr. Coxe's colleagues. Then follows the *slang* about their being born “free American citizens.” Well might

Charlotte Cordai exclaim, as she passed on to the place of execution, amidst the cries of "Vive la Liberte," "Oh! Liberty, what crimes are perpetrated under the sanction of thy holy name." Are we to be told by a Professor of the University of Pennsylvania, that liberty consists in licentiousness. That students, who in the eye of the law and of reason are in a state of pupilage, are to be permitted, simply because they are free born American citizens, to insult their Professors, and to convert the Halls of Science into theatres of riot and confusion. Shame! shame! that such a doctrine should have found any one, much less a gentleman who has grown grey as a teacher of youth, to sustain and enforce it. The weight of a very small bird may detach the mighty avalanche from its resting place on the summit of the "cloud-capt mountain," but, when once in progress, an army of giants cannot arrest its descent. It is a very easy matter to bring a class of Students into a state of mutiny and rebellion, but having done so, it is a very difficult one to controul them—to say "thus far shalt thou go and no farther." We do not claim to ourselves the faculty of being able to foretell the events of the future, but we can without this assumption, with the most perfect confidence state, that some at least of Dr. Coxe's colleagues will, before another year has passed, bitterly and sincerely regret they did not stand by him in this the day of his persecution and adversity. The students, already feeling strong in the unrestrained license which has been allowed them, speak openly of the Professors, who *they* intend to expel. And we have little doubt, but that we shall have the same drama enacted next session, with the difference of a new victim being substituted for Dr. Coxe. But we return from this digression to the examination of the Professor's speech. Having thus, in the first part of it, encouraged the students, next comes the reproof; and it will be admitted to have been a very gentle one. Their acts of violence of that day were very improper. Why? Because by such acts they would prejudice their own cause, and by compelling the government to act with energy, they might fail in the object in which they were engaged, viz. the expulsion of Dr. Coxe. That this was desirable in the opinion of his colleagues, the Professor offers unquestionable evidence. "I have myself, again and again," says he, "stated to the Trustees that I consider the Professor of Materia Medica incompetent to deliver a course of lectures." And not satisfied with this clear and unsophisticated statement of his opinion of Dr. Coxe's incompetency, the same sentiment is immediately reiterated, "But his being unfit to deliver a course of lectures is his misfortune, not his fault," &c. Having thus damned the professorial and scientific reputation of his colleague, he closes with a eulogy on his private character. "*He is a respectable old gentleman! a good husband!! a good father!!! and a good citizen!!!!*"

Such was the substance, we do not pretend that it was the very words of the speech delivered by the Professor of the Theory and Practice of Physic in the University of Pennsylvania, after his colleague had been grossly insulted and confined for nearly two hours in his private room. Let the public form their own opinion as to its propriety and decency. Let any man, at all conversant with collegiate discipline, answer the following question. Could any Professor, no matter what his talents and acquirements might be, be sustained and supported in the discharge of his duties, after his students had heard such a speech in reference to him, from one of his colleagues? The answer, we know, will be unhesitatingly in the negative. Dr. Coxe appeared to have felt it so, for, although he had in his address delivered on the same day, declared, that until "*the decision of the Trustees was known, he was determined to continue to perform his duties.*"—He, now, on hearing of this speech, determined to discontinue them, and addressed the Trustees to the effect, that unless they would adopt measures to guarantee him from insult, and secure his personal safety, he could not continue to lecture. So the business at present stands. The present incumbent has not resigned, but he has discontinued his lectures.

Such is the brief history of the persecutions which have been instituted against the Professor of Materia Medica in the University of Pennsylvania. Our information has been received from such sources, that we can vouch for its being substantially correct. There may be some trifling errors in the minor details; in all its great features, it has been given without exaggeration. The writer has indeed been anxious rather to keep down, than to add to the colouring of the picture. He can truly say, he has "*set down naught in malice.*" He has felt deeply and most sincerely for the wrongs and injuries sustained by the venerable and highly respectable incumbent of the Chair of "Materia Medica." And he knows that when the facts of his case are known, a high minded and generous public will likewise award him their sympathy. But, he has not allowed his feelings to lead him into any intemperance of expression. He has not pretended to say with what party the plot for the ruin of Dr. Coxe originated. He has simply, and without exaggeration detailed the facts, and has left every member of the community to form his own opinion on this subject. We feel that the story we have narrated is one of deep and absorbing interest to the citizens of the United States; not only in so far as the rights of a highly respectable individual are concerned, but, more emphatically, as the interests and good government of all the academical and scientific institutions of the country are involved in the decision of the trustees of the University of Pennsylvania. To them, the eyes of every individual connected with the education of youth, will be directed with the most intense anxiety; for their decision, not only involves the tranquillity and prosperity of the Institution of which they are the guardians, but, it will operate either for good or evil to every college and school in the country. The University of Pennsylvania is one of the oldest and most respectable in the United States. If it be decided by the government, that the pupils of schools are to be created the judges of the competency of the Professors, what a fearful and disorganizing precedent will be established. A precedent which will strike at the very root of every thing like order: a precedent, which, if established, will compel Professors in the performance of their duties, not to do what *they* consider right, but, what *they* consider will be agreeable to their students—a precedent which will completely overturn the natural order of things, and constitute our youth the masters and directors of their seniors. We cannot, and will not believe, that men like *White, Binney, Sergeant, Meredith, Chauncey, Onderdonk*, and a host of others, who have ever fearlessly stood forward as the champions of good order, will allow their names to sanction an act, which may have the effect of introducing rebellion and riot into every college in the United States. We call on them to arise in their power; to act manfully and with decision; to assert the supremacy of law and good order, and to convince the misguided students that they, the Trustees, are, and shall continue to be, the judges of the competency or incompetency of their Professors.

The question as to Dr. Coxe's competency, is one too ridiculous to be discussed. Let the fact only be remembered, that he has occupied the chair he now fills for nearly twenty years, and that too, during the most brilliant epoch in the history of the Medical School of the University; and that up to the year 1831, he delivered his lectures with advantage and acceptance to much larger classes than those which now fill the Halls of the University. Is he not one of the most learned and scientific Physicians in the United States?—Look to his late work on the question of the "Discovery of the Circulation of the Blood," and the question is answered? Is he not a most zealous and devoted Professor in the performance of the duties of his Professorship? Even his enemies cannot deny him this merit.—Has he ever prostituted the dignity of his office by retailing from his Chair, with the view of creating a laugh, obscene and indecent stories? Let the students answer this question.—Has he been to blame, because, from his superior learning, he has been able to detect and expose many of those improvements claimed as discoveries in the healing art, by his

contemporaries, as no discoveries: but that they had been well known, and fully and minutely described by the ancients? Is this in fact, the "*head and front of his offending?*"—*Let his colleagues answer this question.* On what evidence, it may be asked, is the truth of Dr. Coxe's incompetency as a Teacher of Materia Medica and Pharmacy sustained? We shall be told—first, that a Memorial to this effect has been signed by a large number of his Class, and transmitted to the Trustees. Now, waiving for a moment the impropriety of permitting students to constitute themselves the judges of the competency of their Professors, let us examine the character and qualifications, to form a judgment of a majority of the signers of this Memorial. The number, we are told, is two hundred and sixty: but, out of this, there is one hundred and twenty-two first course students, who only heard the Professor deliver a few Introductory Lectures to the course of Materia Medica, and who, from their ignorance of medical science, must be allowed, even by the most strenuous advocates for allowing students to judge of the competency of their Professors, as not entitled to an opinion; at all events, to an opinion that should have the weight of a straw in the decision of the question. There is then, in addition to the one hundred and twenty-two first course students, whose opinion will be granted, on all hands, to be of no value, between twenty and thirty names to be found on the list, who are not students of Dr. Coxe's Class. By what right, we may ask, have these gentlemen placed their names there? They surely are not entitled to dictate to the Trustees on a question affecting the competency of a Professor whose Lectures they do not attend. And lastly, there is to be found on this list, the names of the students who were rejected on the last graduation. We can readily believe that these gentlemen would sign a Memorial declaratory of the incompetency of the whole batch of their Examinators: The remaining names are those of students who have before attended Lectures; and, incredible as it may appear, Dr. Coxe's colleagues have certified to the Trustees, that they are most competent judges!!

We really could not have believed this fact, unless we had received our information from the most unquestionable authority. When, in the order of events, they are themselves denounced by the same authority as incompetent teachers, will they, we would ask, sustain and support the same opinion. If the students are qualified to decide as to the fitness of a Professor of Materia Medica for the performance of his duties, they are assuredly qualified to settle the question as to the incompetency of a Professor of Chemistry, of Anatomy, &c. &c. and should they see fit when they have succeeded in expelling Dr. Coxe, to do so, surely the gentlemen who have asserted the excellency of their judgment, will not then be found to have altered their opinion.

The second evidence on which Dr. Coxe's incompetency is supported, we blush when we write it, is a declaration to that effect, signed by his colleagues. It is really too painful for us to enlarge on this subject; and we are afraid were we to allow ourselves to do so, we would be led to employ terms of reprobation and disgust, for which we might afterwards feel regret. We shall, therefore, merely offer one or two observations upon it. Admitting, for the sake of argument, the competency of Dr. Coxe's colleagues as judges of his qualifications, how, it may be asked, did they not discover his incompetency, until after the attempt which was made to unite his professorship with that of the Institutes of Medicine, had failed. During the most brilliant epoch in the history of the school, when his lectures were to be compared with the eloquent discourses of Rush, and the animated and lucid demonstrations of Wistar, &c. &c. and when thus submitted to a much severer comparative test of their excellence, than they have of late been subjected to, how was it that he was not then suspected either by the Trustees, Professors or the students, as incompetent. Have Dr. Coxe's colleagues attended themselves his lectures? We believe we may with confidence assert that they have not, and consequently their evidence being derived from hearsay, not from personal observation, is of little value; and if they had only felt as they ought to

have done to a colleague, it would never have been given. Dr. Coxe, we have been told, has proposed to the Trustees, that a public trial of the qualifications of all the Medical Professors of the School should take place; and has testified his willingness to submit to an examination by his colleagues on the department he teaches, provided only that they will afterwards individually consent to be examined in public by him on the several subjects on which they lecture. The examination would truly be a most edifying and interesting one.

We have heard it pled as an apology for Dr. Coxe's colleagues, that the reputation of the University of Pennsylvania is rapidly sinking in the estimation of the public. That the Jefferson Medical College, a young, and, until lately, a despised rival, has so increased her students (we believe in two years from sixty to above two hundred and forty) and so extended her reputation by the zeal and energy of her Professors, that she begins now to be held in higher repute than her elder sister; and that something must be done to save the University from ruin. We grant that the reputation of Jefferson Medical College stands deservedly very high with the profession: but, let the University only follow her example, let the Professors only consider no labour or exertion too much to benefit and instruct their students, let them not be satisfied with *reading* Lectures twenty years old, but let them keep pace with the progress of their Profession; let them live in harmony and brotherly kindness with each other, and we can assure them, although they could not hope to put down their rival, they will sustain a respectable reputation and attract a good Class. Will the Medical Faculty of the University admit, that, allowing Dr. Coxe is incompetent, they are so weak and impotent that the talents of the *five other gentlemen* cannot sustain the Institution. We believe not.—Yet, assuredly, to argue that the School is sinking from the incompetency of the Professor of Materia Medica, is tacitly to admit that the five other Professors cannot support its reputation.

If this is really the fact, the Medical School of the University must be in a most deplorable state, and will require a much more effective remedy than the one proposed, to restore it to a vigorous and healthy condition.

In conclusion, we have only to observe, that in furnishing the public with a history of the disturbances which have occurred in the University of Pennsylvania, and which have terminated in compelling the Professor of Materia Medica to discontinue his lectures; it has been our most anxious desire to write with calmness, and to avoid any thing like harshness of expression. We have, as far as possible in detailing facts, endeavoured to avoid fixing the blame on any party. It is true, that the recital of the circumstances of the case, place Dr. Coxe's colleagues in a suspicious and very disagreeable position; but the candid reader, will, we trust, admit, that they have themselves, not the historian of the transaction, to blame. Their conduct, to use the mildest terms which can be employed, has been exceedingly indelicate towards their colleague. They, it were, who first attacked his interest, by attempting to convince the Trustees, that the department of "Materia Medica and Pharmacy" was so unimportant, that half a Course on these subjects would be sufficient to satisfy the wants of Medical Students; and that it would be for the interest of the University to associate with him another Professor, and take from him one-half of his fees. They, it were, who, in two several instances, *although they did not attend Dr. Coxe's Lectures*, certified to the Trustees, in writing, that they were of opinion that he was incompetent to discharge the duties of his Chair. They must themselves admit, that they have taken no steps to check the disturbances which have occurred in his Class Room, and that their supineness, if they have done nothing else, which we do not assert that they have, has had the effect of making the Students believe, that their attempt to drive the Professor of Materia Medica from his Chair, has had their countenance and support. Most certainly their conduct has had this effect. Those opposed to Dr. Coxe, have been constantly in the habit of saying—"We cannot fail in putting out

Coxe, for we have the support of the five other Professors." And those in favour of supporting him, have in their despondency declared, "It is useless to stand by Dr. Coxe, we cannot hope to succeed, and to continue to attempt it, is merely prejudicing our interests with those who are to be our examiners." We, therefore, insist, that the conduct pursued by Dr. Coxe's colleagues, if they have taken no active part in getting up the disturbances, has been most unguarded as subjecting them to so disagreeable a suspicion.

What are we to say of the conduct of the students? We answer, unhesitatingly, that they are comparatively very little to blame. We believe that a more amiable, high-minded class of young gentlemen, have never assembled within the walls of this or any other University.—They, of themselves, most assuredly, would never have set about the ungracious task of blasting the reputation, and ruining the fortunes of a venerable old gentleman, whose intercourse with them had ever been marked by urbanity and kindness. Youth is the season of impulse, for good or for evil.—The spirit then in its freshness, hurries the individual forward in any course into which he may be led, heedless of consequences. Tell a student that, by expelling a Professor, he will perform a meritorious act, and benefit the interests of a great Public Institution.—Unrestrained by a matured judgment, the very better feelings of his nature hurries him on to perpetrate acts, which, on reflection, he will look back on with the most painful regret. We know that even the most prominent amongst those who have opposed Dr. Coxe, and the number is very small, will, when they have had time to think coolly on their conduct; when the excitement of public meetings shall have died away, sincerely deplore their conduct of this session in reference to their Professor. We feel most sincerely for them, from the very awkward position into which they have unwarily been led. We are told, that as the charter of the University requires the candidates for graduation to have attended two *full* Courses of Lectures, that those who have not attended Dr. Coxe's Lectures, cannot be admitted as candidates. We do hope the Trustees will, if possible, obviate this difficulty, and, by postponing the graduation, and continuing the Lectures during the months of March and April, enable the Professor to complete his Course, and the Students to fulfil the terms required by the regulations for graduation.

In this article, we have spoken much of the necessity of supporting and sustaining the discipline of Academical and Scientific Institutions.—Let our sentiments on this head not be misconstrued and misrepresented. We are the last persons living who would plead in favour of a severe or rigorous discipline for the government of students. This, we are persuaded, would have a most injurious tendency. We would have Medical Professors consider their pupils merely as the younger members of the same family.—To lead them in the path of duty, by their love and esteem; and to win this by the most unceasing and zealous efforts in their service.—To be on terms of intimacy and friendship with them; and both in and out of their Class Rooms, to treat them as the members of a common profession. This intimacy and kindly feeling may exist, without the Professor's forfeiting the respect and esteem of his students. All the discipline for which we argue, is, that wholesome discipline which will prevent pupils from stepping from their proper place, and usurping the government of the Institution, where they are pursuing their studies. If the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania have so far forgot the sacred trust committed to them, as to remove the 'Professor of Materia Medica and Pharmacy,' on a Memorial to that effect coming from the students, we tremble for the consequences.—But we will not, cannot believe it. A more respectable body of gentlemen than those who form the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, were never associated in the government of any scientific Institution; and we feel confident that they will not, in the hour of trial, be found wanting in the performance of their duty.—But, by firmness, moderation, and kindness, sustain the government of the University, and restore contentment, order, and harmony to the distracted and much agitated Class.

Philadelphia, Jan. 12, 1835.